New York State’s 500-mile-long system of navigable waterways connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Great Lakes is among New York State’s greatest assets.

We believe in protecting it as a National Historic Landmark waterway.

We believe in connecting communities to their waterfronts and to each other as a “string of pearls” across the full expanse of upstate New York.

We believe in promoting its history, beauty, and incredible recreational assets.

We believe in supporting efforts to improve environmental quality for present and future generations.

The New York State Canal System has been a transformative waterway since its inception. As we continue to celebrate the bicentennial of its construction and opening, our work is laser focused on ensuring that today’s canals serve as catalysts for a vibrant future for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

2019 was a big year for inviting a wider circle of people to experience all that the Canalway Corridor has to offer. We significantly expanded our outreach with exciting new programs and invaluable new resources. The impact was profound. You’ll see that by the numbers on page 2. Please read on to discover the people and places behind the statistics—the real lives in real communities where enthusiasm, dedication, and drive are already achieving the future we believe in.
2019 By the Numbers

- **285,000** Miles logged for the Canalway Challenge
- **$42,080** In student fees generated for historic sites and museums
- **$30,000** Grants awarded to six sites, leveraging $178,618 in funding
- **3,000** NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebooks produced
- **580** Points of interest listed on the new online NYS Canal Map
- **30** Events sponsored, attracting 229,700 attendees

- **8,400** Students educated from 66 school districts
- **18,900** Calendars distributed at more than 80 libraries and visitor centers
- **70,000** Erie Canalway Map & Guides distributed
- **285** Museums, visitor centers, libraries, communities and non-profits directly engaged
- **120** Paddlers participated in Paddle the Flight
- **32** Products offered in the newly launched NYS Canal Store
LAUNCHING THE CANAL WAY CHALLENGE

People from 25 states and Canada walked, ran, cycled, and paddled their way to fitness and fun this year as part of the new Canalway Challenge, launched in May. More than 1,279 individuals, 267 teams, and 30 organizations signed on and completed 285,000 miles on the Canalway Trail and NYS Canal System, the equivalent of circling the globe 11 times.

An Experience of Discovery

In addition to meeting a fitness goal of 15, 90, 180, or 360 miles, Canalway Challenge participants expressed excitement about exploring new places, spending time with friends and family, and seeing wildlife. The Challenge appealed to people seeking more adventurous weekend getaways and vacations, as well as to local residents seeking to get or stay fit.

The Canalway Challenge brought people to every part of the Canalway Corridor. Most participants took multiple trips and visited new communities, historic sites, and local businesses, resulting in increased tourism and improved awareness of all that New York’s canals offer.

“I loved spending time biking with my family and running with my friends! I spent time on the canal trail in places throughout NY that I never would have visited if not for this challenge.”

– Sara Hanna, 90 Miles

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Collaboration Key to Success

Extensive outreach to tourism promotion agencies, state agencies, visitor centers, non-profits, and recreational groups resulted in 65 organizations signing on as Promotional Partners. From placing brochures in visitor centers to outreach at the NYS Fair to sharing videos on social media, multiple stakeholders helped launch the Challenge far and wide.

We also mobilized the power of events to introduce the Canalway Challenge. We sponsored 14 recreational events and collaborated with 15 others to provide fun and organized ways for people to rack up miles. A partnership with Parks & Trails New York brought the Canalway Challenge to Cycle the Erie Canal participants, who earned 360-End-to-End status during the eight-day bike tour from Buffalo to Albany.

In July, John Robinson, CEO of Our Ability, Inc, handcycled all 360 miles from Buffalo to Albany to raise awareness of the needs of people with disabilities. During his Journey Along the Erie Canal, we collaborated with John and his team to invite people with disabilities and their families and friends to join them for the 1st Mile Challenge, as a way to make the Canalway Challenge more inclusive. Hundreds of people came out to cheer John on and try one mile themselves.

Financial support was also critical. The program was funded in part by a grant from Market New York through I LOVE NY, New York State’s Division of Tourism, as part of the state’s Regional Economic Development Council initiative. The New York State Canal Corporation provided financial support and enthusiastic promotion, while Eastern Mountain Sports generously offered incentives and discounts to participants.

“We have passed through NY’s heartland, gliding, biking, and hiking near historic quaint canal towns, scenic farmlands, and thriving wildlife preserves. The canal joins attractions both modern and historic, so there’s something new around every bend, every turn…The Erie Canal is an experience of discovery! How awesome is that!”

– Meg Kolodzie, 180 Miler

The Canalway Challenge continues in 2020! Look forward to an even bigger year ahead!
UNLOCKING THE CANAL SYSTEM FOR PADDLERS

When the NYS Canal System opened in May, an increasing number of kayaks, canoes, and SUPs shared the waterway with cruisers and powerboats, thanks to the New York State Canalway Water Trail Guidebook and Navigational Map Set released in spring 2019. The culmination of many months of research, writing, and mapping, the guidebook includes mile-by-mile descriptions of launch sites, paddler-friendly amenities, and places of interest for over 450 miles of the NYS Canal System.

The guidebook serves as a much-needed invitation to paddlers, helping them to discover the history, beauty, and adventure of paddling the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego and Champlain canals. Thanks to funding support from I LOVE NY and the National Park Service, we produced 3,000 copies of the guidebook and maps and distributed more than 1,000 this year.

Paddling Events

Additional proof of the growing interest in canal paddling was in evidence at several paddling events, hosted and sponsored by Erie Canalway. Our inaugural Paddle the Flight in Waterford in June attracted 120 paddlers from as far away as South Carolina, Colorado, California, and Montreal, Canada. The colorful flotilla of kayaks and canoes passed through rock cuts, locks, and quiet stretches of canal before bursting through the final gates of Lock 2 and into a bustling Waterford Harbor.

The annual Old Erie Canal Boat Float and Bash in central New York attracted nearly 800 paddlers. Hosted by the Old Erie Canal Community Working Group and Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, the event also served as a kickoff for the Canalway Challenge.

A series of five paddling events, 15 Miles on the Erie Canal, drew 120 people to discover the Mohawk Valley’s history, beauty, and recreational opportunities. The series was hosted collaboratively by the Arkell Museum, Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, and Down by the River Kayaks.

Watch for a number of new initiatives in 2020 as we continue to grow the NYS Canalway Water Trail with wayfinding signs, model launch site standards, and a water trail stewardship program. We will also launch Ticket to Paddle, a pilot program to introduce middle school students in Montgomery County to kayaking and canoeing.

“Thank you again for opening up the world of canal travel to us.”
– Samantha Dederick

“Your new guide book is an incredible reference. With launches identified with mile markers it makes it so easy to plan a trip.”
– Jim McCutcheon

Trails Take Center Stage

When the 24th International Trails Symposium & Training Institute came to Syracuse in April, we seized the opportunity to focus on the Erie Canalway’s incredible land and water trails. During the event, we convened an interactive caucus on water trails, showcased the new NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebook in our booth, and gave several presentations. In addition, we collaborated with the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to bring together more than 20 kayakers for a mobile workshop at Lock E24 in Baldwinsville that focused on launch and access points with a special emphasis on adaptive paddling.
The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Canal Corporation teamed up to sponsor 30 festivals and events in 2019, which attracted 229,700 people. From community events to recreational activities to large festivals, these events showcased the Canalway Corridor’s nationally significant heritage and the tremendous recreational appeal of the waterway and Canalway Trail.

This year’s event highlights included Tall Ships in Buffalo, the Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour (hosted by Parks & Trails New York), 20th anniversary Tugboat Roundup in Waterford, and Rome’s Locktoberfest.

In collaboration with the Museum Association of New York, we also sponsored the Smithsonian Institution’s WaterWays Exhibition tour. Tens of thousands of people viewed the traveling exhibition at four sites within the Corridor: Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse, Aurora-on-Cayuga in Aurora, Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village in Amherst, and Chapman Historical Museum in Glens Falls.

These sponsorships prove that even small investments in canal events add up to big results. Cultural, heritage, and recreational events deliver $1.3 billion annually in economic benefits to Erie Canalway communities.
IMPROVING WAYS FOR VISITORS TO NAVIGATE TO GREAT SITES AND EXPERIENCES

With more than 500 miles of waterways and trails and hundreds of communities and places of interest in the National Heritage Corridor, it can be challenging for visitors to know where to begin. With our new online canals map, visitors are discovering that New York’s canals are just a click away.

NYCanalMap.com brings together the power of mapping tools with a wealth of information on hundreds of places of interest, visitor centers, boat rentals and tours, and paddling access sites. Directions and a distance calculator make it easy to plan trips by bike, kayak, boat, or car. Users can filter by features such as municipal centers, public restrooms, camping, and picnic facilities.

We also developed online Best Bet Trips for paddling and cycling to offer greater guidance to recreational travelers. Each trip suggests starting and ending locations, mileage, and places of interest.

For those who prefer print, the Erie Canalway Map & Guide continues to serve as the official welcome to the National Heritage Corridor. More than 180 visitor centers, heritage sites, and tourism partners distributed 70,000 copies in 2019.

Our social media reach grew to 11,000 followers on Facebook, 872 Water Trail group members, 580 Canalway Challenge group members, and 1,650 Instagram followers. These online communities facilitate connections and sharing of experiences and recommendations that bring a valuable personal touch to our programs.

“I have enjoyed the various communications I have received from your office since I paddled the Erie Canal several years ago. The Facebook page has been great fun to follow and contribute to. BRAVO!” – Dave Ellingson, Seattle, WA

“Whether you enjoy boating, cycling, visiting historic canal towns, or seeing the canal’s engineering marvels, NYCanalMap.com will help you easily navigate your way to memorable experiences along America’s most iconic waterways.”

– Brian U. Stratton, Director, NYS Canal Corporation

Schoharie Aqueduct, Fort Hunter | Stefanie Obkirchner
Go to Cape Cod or Maine and you’ll be surrounded by gift shops full of lobster and buoy-themed products. Visit New York City and you’ll find the Empire State Building and Statue of Liberty on everything from hats to key chains. Yet, visitors to the Erie Canalway have been hard pressed to find merchandise that showcases New York’s iconic canals…until now. We opened an online canal store (shop.eriecanalway.org) in 2019 so that canal enthusiasts and visitors can bring home a memento of their visit and show their pride in New York’s canals.

The store includes a variety of apparel and gear with designs for each canal (Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, Champlain), as well as the NYS Canalway Water Trail, and the Canalway Challenge. Our goal is to offer quality products that generate sales to support our programs, as well as help to cultivate pride of place.

Sharing the beauty and character of the Canalway Corridor is also the driving force behind our annual photo contest and calendar. We are thrilled with the enthusiastic response that the free calendars garner each year. Eighty libraries and visitor centers distributed 18,900 calendars on our behalf to eager patrons.

“I got the calendar and I LOVE it!! Great pictures, great variety, all having lots of color! Thanks sooooooo much!!”
– Rich Thompson, Lampe, Missouri

“This program is extremely popular from contest to calendar. The publicity it gives the Erie Canalway is priceless. Thank you for making it happen!”
– Peg Pelletier, Newark Public Library
ADVANCING PRESERVATION, RECREATION, AND EDUCATION WITH IMPACT! GRANTS

We are fortunate to collaborate with an extraordinary network of grantees that are doing vital work to preserve and showcase canal heritage in their local communities. In 2019, we awarded $30,000 in grants to six organizations, which leveraged an additional $178,618 in funding. That’s impact!

**Buffalo Maritime Center** in Buffalo ($7,000) is developing an interactive, interpretive kiosk to build community awareness and provide educational information about the construction of the replica of Governor DeWitt Clinton’s canal packet boat that will be used to celebrate the Bicentennial “Wedding of the Waters” in 2025.

**Corn Hill Waterfront and Navigation Foundation** in Rochester ($3,000) is planning four Ride & Glide tours, which will include a cruise on the canal boat Sam Patch and a bicycle ride along the Erie Canalway Trail. The tours will highlight canal history and the natural environment.

**Fairport Industrial Development Agency** ($7,000) is using grant funds to assist with pre-development activities for the Heritage Trail/South Bank Enhancements component of the larger Fairport Bicentennial Canal Gateway project. The trail will highlight the growth of Fairport and the Erie Canal and provide improved connectivity with Main Street.

**Rochester Museum & Science Center** ($7,000) designed and installed a virtual reality experience within its Rochester in 1827 exhibition to provide visitors with new insight into the canal’s early history in the Rochester area.

**Rochester Public Library** ($3,700) built a comprehensive Erie Canal themed curriculum module, Erie Canal for the Classroom, for the Library’s award-winning RochesterVoices.org website.

**Schenectady County Historical Society** ($2,300) expanded access to recreational and learning opportunities by offering the public guided Kayak through History tours along the Erie Canal/Mohawk River. Tour themes included canal history, environment, and geology.

“The grant program provided critical additional funding for the pre-development phase of our Bicentennial Canal Gateway Project in the Village of Fairport. Additionally, we were able to draw on Erie Canalway’s significant expertise to assist in the design of an interpretive heritage trail that will commemorate the Bicentennial of the Erie Canal and showcase the history of Fairport within the larger Corridor story.”

– Martha Malone, Executive Director, Fairport Industrial Development Agency

“The Erie Canal is one of Rochester’s greatest assets and a historic piece of our community fabric. These grants will help showcase our heritage by investing in new educational opportunities and activities, helping to cement our place as a world-class tourist destination.”

– Congressman Joseph Morelle (NY-25)
CONNECTING STUDENTS TO NEW YORK’S CANAL HERITAGE

More than 8,400 students from 66 school districts experienced the canal firsthand this year during field trips funded by our Ticket to Ride and Every Kid Outdoors programs. Eighteen historic sites, museums, and national parks provided engaging programs to share canal history and spark student thinking about how to solve problems with ingenuity and perseverance.

In addition to connecting kids to the canal, we began an exciting endeavor to incorporate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) into these educational field trips. In concert with the NYS Canal Corporation, we developed a STEM Advisory Committee to help guide and inform our efforts. The committee includes experts from SUNY University of Buffalo, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse University, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York State Museum, NYSUT, and the New York State Department of Education. In the coming year, we’ll work with six of our not-for-profit educational sites to pilot projects that blend STEM and social studies concepts.

Funding from the National Park Service allowed us to hire the R/E/D Group to evaluate and train five educational sites in the Capital Region and Mohawk Valley. A day-long workshop brought site educators together to begin assessing staff capacity, funding sources, and opportunities for incorporating STEM programming.

By the Numbers

8,400 students visited 18 historic sites and museums in 2019, a 20 percent growth over 2018.

49,000 students from 220 schools have been served since 2012.

“We had such a wonderful and educational experience last year.”
– Joelle Weaver, Assistant Principal, Manor Intermediate School

“We had a wonderful season and the kids really loved coming! Thank you for your support!”
– Tracy Murphy, Historic Palmyra

“Wow!! So grateful to have this cost covered. Thank you!!”
– Joan Mashayekhi, Nate Perry Elementary
No. 8

ENVISIONING A BETTER FUTURE FOR MATTON SHIPYARD AND SCHOHARIE AQUEDUCT

Two historic canal sites, Matton Shipyard and the Schoharie Aqueduct, located on the eastern end of the Erie Canal, may one day serve as major attractions for residents, visitors, and Empire State Trail users. We are working closely with NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which manages these sites, and a host of state and local organizations to preserve and transform these significant state assets.

Begun in 2016, the Matton Shipyard Preservation & Adaptive Reuse Initiative continues to make steady progress. We performed environmental assessments, secured additional resources, and planned for building and site remediation, which will take place in 2020. In addition to NYS OPRHP, the NYS Canal Corporation and the City of Cohoes are playing key roles as we work towards opening portions of the site for public use and more fully incorporating it into Peebles Island State Park.

Efforts to envision a new future for the 1843 Schoharie Aqueduct also progressed this year, thanks to an alliance of federal, state, and county agencies and non-profit organizations. The alliance is working to stabilize the aqueduct and explore the possibility of constructing a trail bridge across the Schoharie Creek to create a unique and safe off-road trail experience for Empire State Trail users.

Our first steps included bringing in the National Park Service Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) to document the current state of the structure and evaluate changes over time. Nine of the aqueduct’s original 14 arches were in place when the first HAER team drew the structure in 1969; six are intact today. HAER’s detailed graphic documentation will be an important resource to engineers working with NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the Preservation League of New York State, Montgomery County, Friends of Schoharie Crossing, the Canal Society of NYS, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and others working to secure an exciting new future for this National Historic Landmark structure.

“We couldn’t be more excited about the future potential of the Schoharie Aqueduct. We’ve assembled a great team, which has led to successful grant applications and a well-crafted vision. This project will showcase the rich history and recreational splendor of the Mohawk Valley and pave the way for our future.”

– Matthew L. Ossenfort, Montgomery County Executive
This year, we contributed to the Governor’s Reimagine the Canals Initiative. We took a leading role in advocating for heritage development strategies that integrate preservation, conservation, recreation, regional partnerships, and economic growth to maximize the competitive advantages of the Canalway Corridor for present and future generations. Our position paper in response to a call for public input outlined five critical areas of focus with specific recommendations to:

- Preserve the historic and authentic New York State Canal System as a navigable waterway connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the upper Great Lakes.
- Maximize connectivity between water routes, trails, canal communities, and attractions.
- Maximize regional, national and worldwide visitation that fosters improved quality of life for Canalway Corridor residents.
- Leverage the “Erie Canal” brand to increase awareness and visitation, and strengthen pride of place.
- Improve water and environmental quality as a foundation of the region’s quality of life, tourism, and recreational activities.

As communities across the canal have demonstrated through a variety of waterfront revitalization initiatives, New York’s canals can continue to serve as critical public infrastructure for economic development.

This year, we also continued to advocate for the preservation of historic canal vessels, whose presence on the water contributes much to the historic integrity of the canals as living and working waterways. We are grateful to be in discussion with the NYS Canal Corporation, NY State Historic Preservation Office, Preservation League of NYS, and others to keep working vessels on the water.

While outcomes for these critical initiatives remain uncertain, rest assured that we will continue to protect and promote New York’s National Historic Landmark canals. Together with other strong canal advocates, communities, and partners, we can ensure that a positive future stems from the distinctive sense of place that has been preserved and nurtured for 200 years.
Numerous federal, state, and local agencies, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and others are working independently on a host of endeavors that contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the Canalway Corridor’s heritage resources and economy. Erie Canalway’s added value lies in our ability to focus on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and bind the mutual interests of regional economic revitalization and heritage asset enhancement.

In 2019, we worked to expand the circle of friends engaged in advancing and financially supporting our programs. We engaged with nearly 300 agencies and organizations to achieve our mission and shared goals. The list includes the National Park Service, nine congressional districts, seven New York State agencies, and hundreds of local municipalities, non-profits, museums, visitor centers, libraries, and recreational businesses.

From preservation to tourism to community revitalization, we are achieving bigger results than any of us can do alone.
Donations, Grants and Sponsorships

Erie Canalway Leadership Circle ($10,000+)
National Park Service
New York State Canal Corporation/New York Power Authority
New York State’s Empire State Development and the ILNY Division of Tourism under Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

Erie Canalway Legacy Partners ($5,000-9,999)
Brookfield Renewable
National Park Foundation
Project made possible through generous support of partners including Union Pacific Railroad and donors across the country
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Project funded in part by a grant from the Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation and the Peter H. Brink Leadership Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Erie Canalway Heritage Supporter ($1,000-4,999)
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Parks & Trails New York
Preservation League of New York State
Price Chopper Golub Foundation
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Note: Donations through 11/30/2019. Our sincere apologies for any errors or omissions. Please contact us at 518-237-7000 x 207 with any corrections.

* The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor benefits from the work of two entities—a federal Commission and the nonprofit Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. These simplified financial statements reflect a summary of both entities. The Commission auditor is Jones & Company, PC. The Heritage Fund auditor is Cusack & Company, CPAs LLC. More detailed and audited financial statements for both entities may be requested by contacting our office. In addition, financial statements for the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund may be obtained from the NYS Office of the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau at www.charitiesnys.com or (212) 416-8686.
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Our apologies for any errors or omissions.

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National Park Service
National Park Service
Documentation Programs
2k Design
National Park Service
Recreation & Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Historic Palmyra
Chesapeake Technical Center
Discover Saratoga
Ambient Environmental Inc.
2k Design
Elevation Ten Thousand
Sheila Buff, Inc.
Sarah E. Bilofsky Communications
Web Instinct
R/E/D Group, LLC
USM Solutions, LLC
Rs/Us, LLC
National Park Service
Underwater Resources Management, Inc.
National Park Service
Doesen, A.

Contractors and Consultants

Note: Donations through 11/30/2019. Our sincere apologies for any omissions or errors. Please contact us at 518-237-7000 x 207 with any corrections.
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Joseph Morelle (25th District)
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Vacant (27th District)

TRANSITIONS
We gratefully acknowledge the contributions and years of service of departing Commissioners Tom Grasso and Doug Hamlin and Board Director Peter Welsby. Their expertise and participation in various initiatives will be greatly missed! We welcomed Mona Caron and Miyoko Fulleringer as program managers to our staff in 2019. From day one, their exceptional skills, experience, and good humor have contributed much to our staff and to our ability to advance our work.

*Commission representative